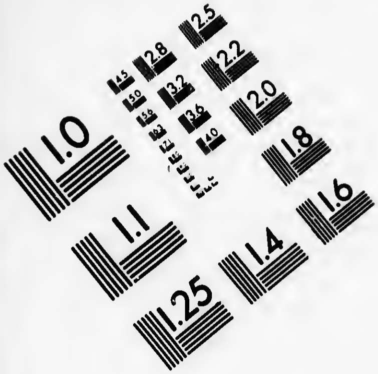
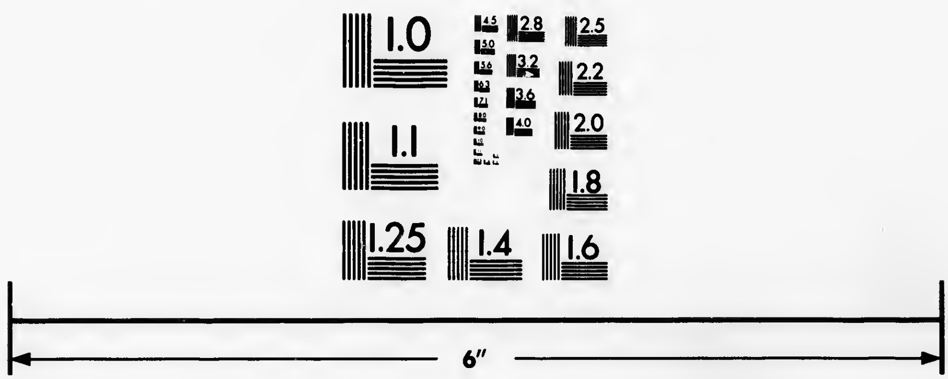
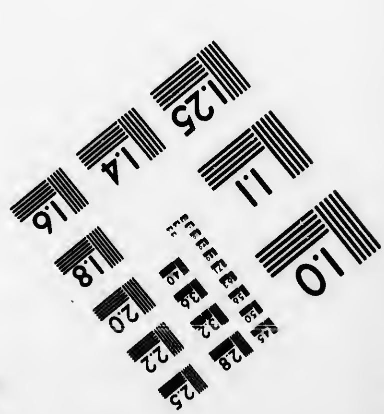




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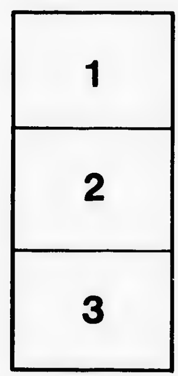
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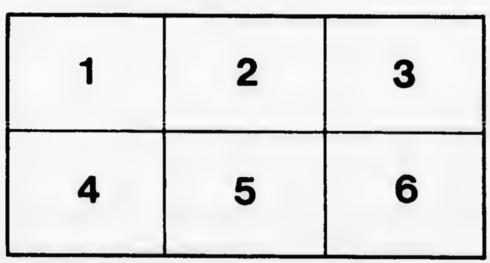
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THE

HOLY MASS

EXTRACTS FROM

ST. LEONARD OF PORT-MAURICE

R. F. d Cochem and M. Mechtilda of the H. Sacrament, Benedictine.

FOR SALE:

In Montreal, at M. de la Rousselière, 319, Sherbrooke St.

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FL. BOURGEAULT VIC. CAP.

HOLY MASS

HOLY MASS is the Feast of feasts. Thro' its divine flesh and blood we are made one with Christ in His fulness. Of Mass the Psalmist sang prophetically : "*Thou hast spread a table before me against them that afflict me. With oil hast Thou anointed my head, and how glorious is my inebriating chalice*". (Ps. 22). And yet this astounding mystery is overlooked by reason of its familiarity and practically unknown to most Catholics by reason of its very excellence. Because with human nature in its fallen state, familiarity breeds contempt and invisible things can be known only by spiritually contemplating their greatness. It is

indeed more than wonderful that we can be present so often at the mystical death of a God, at the outpouring upon us of His blood, at His atonement for us to the Father, and still be so cold, so unconcerned, so far away from Jesus.

St Leonard of Port-Maurice, impressed by indifference of Christians, used to say: "Why
" may I not go into the high-ways and cry
" out: misguided people, what are you
" doing, where are you going? Wake up
" once for all from your death-like sleep
" and let the hearing of Holy Mass be your
" cherished and daily devotion".

Great indeed is thy power, oh heavenly Sacrifice! Many a hardened sinner hast thou rescued from everlasting night; many a lost soul mightest thou have saved had it come to thee in the proper spirit.

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But alas, most people hear Mass without inward attention or reverence. There is next to no appreciation of God's transcendent

gift, no practical knowledge of what is implied by the shedding of Christ's blood ; and all thro' want of preparation. Why, Our Lord Himself was thirty-three years preparing for the celebration of His single Mass in the Supper Room.

One of the devil's favorite tricks is to keep our thoughts away from Mass. This accounts for the wide-spread indifference on so important a matter.

If every morning for one half-hour the sky were to send us a shower of gold, would you not, dear Reader, find time to gather in some of it. Well, each day there falls a shower of supernatural gold, not from the clouds, but from the altars of Holy Church. This golden shower is increase of grace, forgiveness of sin, remission of punishment and fellowship in the merits of Christ. Spiritual wealth or poverty are at your back.

If thro' negligence you omit the hearing of daily Mass, your loss is simple infinite. Labour is sweeter, success more telling, divine protection more extended, health of

soul and body greater to one who assists at morning Mass.

***

By Mass alone is God, on earth, adequately and absolutely honored; He receives therein a gift equal to Heaven itself. Of all devotions Mass is by far the holiest, in fact it is above being ranked as a devotion. It is the living Sun that quickens all our works. To neglect it is to cut off the well-spring of godliness.

A holy soul used to say: "Would I had " as many hearts and as many tongues as " there are leaves in the forest and drops " in the sea to love and praise Thee, oh " Lord, as thou deservest"! And one day Our Lord Himself answered her thus: "re- " member, my daughter, that a single Mass " heard with devotion gives me all the glory " you aspire to and infinitely more besi- " des".

Thus it is that by assisting piously at one Mass there is more glory to God and merit for ourselves that any other prayers or good

works can effect, while more sins are atoned or than by the severest penitence. In the presence of that living fire our venial and even our mortal sins disappear like snow before the noon-day sun, and if our love be strong enough, punishment goes with them.

The purifying term of Purgatory is curtailed for ourselves ond others by every Mass devoutly heard. If you are poor and cannot give the usual stipend for Masses, you may help your beloved dead just as well and better by hearing Masses yourself. One Mass heard during life is worth a number said for you after death.

Make it a cherished practice to assist at Mass for the holy souls in Purgatory. Remember how dear they are to God, how

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NOTE : — What is said of mortal sin refers to the many forms of Contrition, one of the principal fruits of the Sacrifice. Perfect Contrition, as we all know, justifies the soul and carries away every vestige of temporal punishment due to sin even before sacramental absolution, which, however, must be supplied as soon as may be.

intense their love of Him, how secure their holiness, how helpless thier condition, how unutterable their expiation. Perhaps at this very moment there may be amongst them friends of yours once loved on earth. Be not remiss in communicating with them thro' the Holy Sacrifice. As you will have done to others so shall it be done to you. St Jerome tells us that during Mass many a soul flies from Purgatory to the embrace of its Heavenly Father.

***

But Holy Mass is not only a prayer, it is a living, substantial action. It is adoration thro' sacrifice in its highest conceivable form This sacrifice is offered to God by the Congregation together with the priest and thro' him. We earnestly commit this great subject to your prayerful consideration. It is in truth " a deep calling unto deep". St Bonaventure tells us that Mass holds mysteries as countless as the drops of ocean, the atoms of air, the angels of Heaven.

During Mass you have the fullest right to offer God the Father all the merits of His Son. These merits are your's by the best of titles since they are the solemn and irrevocable gift of God Himself. Be not listless or neglectful of a privilege so sacred. Your mystical priesthood challenges you to a holy activity for yourself and others. This universal priesthood, which belongs to the humblest of God's children, is held in lamentable abeyance by those who do not hear Mass or who hear it negligently or who, while they are hearing it, busy themselves with other devotions. For your own sakes, dear souls, and for the honor of Our Lord put aside during Mass every prayer, practice or thought save Mass itself. "I offer Thee this Sacrifice" whispered to God from the heart means this: "I worship Thee as Thou "deservest, I love Thee to the full measure "of my capacity, I atone for every sin "against Thee, Thy holiest gifts are mine, "and suffering souls that wait for Thee are "more than ransomed".

*
* *

Do not then, we repeat it, be distressed if you have no money at hand for the stipend. The best stipend is yourself. Go and hear the Mass you may not appropriate with gold or silver ; the priest is offering it for all mankind. It will reach you and yours and be applied according to the power and grasp of your faith. Fear not, open wide the gates of Hope ; Christ and His Sacrifice are infinite.

This is no small comfort to those who by illness or infirmity or other causes are debarred from hearing Mass in the flesh. They can do it in the spirit. They are aware, for instance, that at such a time Mass is going on at a neighbouring Church : let them unite spiritually with the Sacrifice during that solemn half-hour. The blessed Victim will be their's as truly as if they were kneeling at His altar. And do not be confined to one Church. Let your spirit expanded by faith take in every Mass being offered throughout the length and breadth of earth. If you can

compass this tremendous fact, you may share in every Mass said in the universal Church during that single half-hour of inward recollection. Now, the mightier your act of Faith, the greater shall your grace and glory be.

Our Lord once told Mechtilda, a sweet mediæval saint : "I shall specially help and "comfort on their death-bed those who du- "ring life have devoutly heard Mass, my "angels shall be there to assist them."

***

Angels and Archangels, Cherubim andSeraphim stand about our altars during Mass, altho' the Sacrifice be not offered for them. To these glorious Spirits the wondrous love of God for man is a theme of untold adorations. Their reverence extends alike to priest and people so closely linked to Christ. The Liturgy clearly and conclusively establishes the active presence of Angels at the altar, where besides their own personal relation to God they become our Messengers to Him. At one of the most solemn moments

of Mass, the priest bowing low before the Holy of holies, offers up his own and the congregation's prayers in these words: *Command, we beseech Thee, oh almighty God, that these,* (our prayers) *be taken up by the hand of thy blessed Angel and laid on the High Altar of thy presence.* Compare this with what St John relates in the 8th chapter of his Apocalypse. And thus it is that, if we suppose equal devotion in both cases, prayer is mightier at Mass than elsewhere.

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Our Lord once said to blessed Mechtilda: " My mystical sacrifice each day on the al-" tar for the salvation of souls is an act " which I alone can fully comprehend. Nei-" ther the Cherubim nor other created in-" tellect can compass it. My coming is so " full of love that no heart however harden-" ed can resist, if it will but meet me. My " liberality is such that none, however des-" titute, need leave me otherwise than filled

" from the superabundance of my treasures". Blessed the souls who gathered around Him are made partakers of His gifts! Consider, dear Reader, how earnestly you should attend Holy Mass.

Remember that by this Sacrifice Christ offers Himself as the one supreme and essential Mediator between your unworthiness and the holiness of God. Bear this in mind with its stupendous and comforting consequences ; let them become as it were a part of yourself. You will then long for daily Mass and accept many an inconvenience rather than miss it.

***

When the awful words of consecration are spoken by the priest, the Holy Ghost coming down like fire from Heaven, annihilates the substances of bread and wine, and leaving their appearances only, substitutes the Body and Blood of Christ. The hallowed hands of God's minister hold the sacred Humanity as truly as did Mary in her

spotles, womb. Now, had you stood by the crib of Bethlehem on that memorable night, and taking the blessed Child in your arms offered Him in atonement to the Father, can you possibly doubt but your sins should have been forgiven and graces untold have been your's. ? Well, do now as you would have done then. Offer up Jesus to the Father, and I pledge the same graces from the altar as would have come to you at Bethlehem.

***

To blessed Mechtilda again Our Lord used to say : " I give you my sacred Body " and the agonies of my Passion that you „ may present them to me as a gift from you " But I shall return them to you and you " shall offer them to me again, so that each " time your merit may be renewed". Now, this was not said for Mechtilda alone, but for all of us.

A beautiful prayer of the Mass is one immediately following the consecration ; it runs thus : *wherefore, we thy servants and*

thy holy people, mindful of the blessed Passion, the Resurrection and the glorious Ascension of thy Son Jesus Christ Our Lord, do offer Thee a spotless Victim : this Bread of eternal life and this Chalice of everlasing salvation. The congregation and indeed the universal Church are alluded to as "thy "holy people" to signify that thro' Jesus at Mass they are made holy, as it is written : *for them do I sanctify myself; that they also may be sanctified in truth.* (John, 17·19)

***

Together with the Body of the Lord do not forget to offer up specifically His Precious Blood which is in fact the price of our redemption. Ste Magdalen of Pazzi used to offer up continually the Blood of Christ for the conversion of sinners ; and Our Lord was pleased to show her the number she had been instrumental in saving.

This offering to God of the Precious Blood may unquestionably be carried on anywhere and at any time ; but it is never

so fruitful as at Mass since then it is objectively present. Whoever, while assisting at Mass, saith sincerely : "Oh Lord, receive from me this divine blood thro' the ministration of thy priest", offers to God substantially the blood held in the chalice, which oblation is more effective than in any other circumstances. Consequently the altar is to us a mystical Calvary redolent with the same grace that we should have received had we knelt by the material Cross of Christ.

No words can begin to unravel this mystery of love ; no earthly expressions can do more than outline it. Calvary and the altar essentially one yet essentially distinct ; both for the same glorious purpose : our freedom from sin, our abiding union with God.

St Chrysostom says that during Mass the congregation is covered with the Blood of Christ, which means that the sacred Blood is not only shed but poured out spiritually upon each and every one present. Recall the words of St Paul : *you are come to Jesus the mediator of the New Testament, and to*

the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than Abel's. (Heb).

Were our material bodies visibly marked with the Blood of Christ, it would profit us less than this invisible sprinkling which cleanses, hallows and beautifies the spirit. Ste Magdalen of Pazzi tells us the touch of the Blood of Jesus transforms the soul into an image of God so pure and radiant that no mortal tongue may describe it.

During the celebration of Mass the Blood of Jesus cryeth thro' the wounds of the Blessed Body, from the Sacred Heart, by the divine lips, with all the sorrows and sweet ness and power of the Passion. Thinkest thou, dear Reader, that the Father can ignore such a prayer. No, not even had He already condemned a sinning soul, could God hold out against an intercession so mighty ; aye, mighty as Himself. Amen.

A simple Method for Hearing Holy Mass.

Much has been written on the way one should hear Mass and many methods suggested. Now, the best method would be no method at all. The true method is the Sacrifice itself and ourselves who assist at it. But this supposes a purity, freedom and concentration of spirit to which few attain, especially in an age where everything is systematized to suit the debilitated. However, the nearer we come to this ideal the better shall our method be. Therefore, all we can advise is this : *learn* what Mass is ; be penetrated with its sublimity, its holiness, its mystical symbolism, its awful and practical reality, then shall you have no trouble about your methods for hearing it.

Now, to do this begin by looking up the definition of Mass in the penny Catechism. Reflect on it long and prayerfully until you have realized that of all things in the visible creation Mass is by far the most exalted, miraculous, magnificent, terrible and tender. That it takes in at one sweep of almighty love the Church militant, suffering and triumphant ; reaching from the very Heart of God to the lowliest of mortals. That it is Calvary itself, but Calvary glorified and applied. Above all that it is Christ Himself, not the suffering but the risen Christ, who from the Right Hand of the Father manifests Himself to us in ways so transcendent as to be apprehended by Faith alone. On the altars of the Church every barrier between God and man has been swept away by Infinite Love ; invisibly that our Faith may be saved, yet visibly because we are creatures of flesh and blood. Get some book, (there are any number in print), that may tell you something on this great subject ; but most of the work must be done by the meditations of your own heart.

Then take up any of the multitudinous prayer-books now extant and study the outward form or body of Holy Mass. Become conversant with every vestment, ceremony and especially with every prayer made use of by the priest. You will perceive that the tremendous function opens at the foot of the Altar and advances gradually from the self-abasements of contrition thro' the fervor of impetration up to the altitudes of thanksgiving. Every word and motion are full of deepest meaning. Be solicitous in discovering it. At the oblation, when the priest unveils the gifts, the Sacrifice begins ; at the Consecration it culminates, at Communion it is consummated as to its outward purpose. All this you should thoroughly know and devoutly cherish if you expect ever to hear Mass with profit to yourself and others.

Having appropriated these treasures of doctrine and piety, assist at Mass as near to the Sanctuary as you possibly can. On week days this is easily done. Put away for the time all books, beads or other devotion-

al adjuncts and fix both heart and eye on the altar alone : this is a point of paramount importance. *Follow the priest ;* he is there to be looked at, since he is the necessary link between the seen and the unseen. If your mind wanders and your attention flags, which may occur a thousand times, bring them back without impatience or discouragement to the main object of your adorations. Mass is aliving myster y that reveals itself to prepared souls. Had you stood with Our Lady on Mount Calvary you would surely have required no book to tell you what to think or do. No more shall you require it during the short half-hour of Mass, provided you *know* what is going on.

As to your outward demeanor needless to say that levity, staring about the Church and unnecessary talking during Mass amount almost to sacrilege which thoughtlessness alone can excuse ; but you must no longer be thoughtless. Take the bodily post-ure you find most conducive to devotion. It were well to kneel from the oblation to

the communion if it can be done without undue fatigue. In any case let your whole being be centred upon what is taking place on the altar ; you will be highly favored if you are steadfast in that.

At first sight the foregoing method may seem somewhat vague, but if you take it up seriously you will think differently. It is the only substantial, enlightened, spiritual and practical method we know of. It brings Mass home to the heart, where Christ intends it should be. If earnestly followed it would soon make saints of us all.



Holy Communion.

As far as God is concerned Holy Communion exhausts the possibilities of divine love ; as far as we are concerned it is the highest visible expression of Faith, Hope and Charity. It seems almost out of place to speak of it as a duty, so sacred is the privilege, so astounding the favor, so exalted and pressing the invitation. And yet Holy Communion *is* a duty, the very first we owe to ourselves as rational beings : *Amen, amen I say unto you : unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you*, (John. 6-54). Christ made it a precept out of the abundance of His love, that here as elsewhere fear might be the beginning, *but only the beginning* of wisdom.

Holy Communion is the sovereign means of grace, the truly royal road to holiness, the heart-blood of the Mystical Body. Frequent even daily Communion should be the aspiration of every soul nowadays as it was in the primitive Church. *As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father, he who eateth me liveth by me*, (John. 6-58). We have here the sum total of spiritual life.

By Holy Communion we are made partakers of the very life of God Himself thro' the veiled substance of His Humanity. Now this divine life has nothing in common with the senses nor even with the merely natural operations of the soul, altho' by reflex action it sanctifies them all. It is a purely supernatural life, absolutely inaccessible to the unassisted powers of nature and immeasurably above them however great we may suppose them. This is a standing cause of trouble and anxiety even to pious souls. Many persons desire sincerely to receive Holy Communion with devotion and yet,

after receiving it, they seem to " feel nothing". They are moved neither by tears of joy nor other emotions and they conclude there must be something very wrong with them. Irritation and discouragement follow.

Now there is a simple way out of all this. Go to Holy Communion with the liveliest faith, hope and love you can produce and leave the rest to Our Lord. He it is who operates ; you who are operated upon. The quieter you are the better shall it be for you. Concentrate your whole attention on the divine Person now substantially united with your's ; make yourself one with Him so far as your will is concerned ; let Him direct your understanding, memory, imagination, emotions and senses. On Our Lord's entering the temple of your body hand Him the key of the Holy of holies which is your will. He might enter there without your leave for all creation is His ; but Hère quires your consent because love to be complete must be mutual. Then let Him act according to His

good pleasure. If He leaves you dark and cold, be dark and cold. If He floods you with light and reveals His wondrous secrets, receive them with holy joy and humble gratitude. If your imagination runs riot thro' no fault of your's, let it run. If your flesh hangs about you like a wert blanket, let it hang ; what is born of the Spirit is above the flesh. In a word forget your wretched self and be wholly attentive to Our Lord, with peaceful acquiescence in whatever He may do. This is one of the meanings of St Paul's famous text : *I beseech you, Brethren, by the mercy of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God ; your service a reasonable one.* (Rom. 12-1). By reasonable service is meant a surrendering of the mind to God.

What we have said is of vital importance to spiritual progress. In fact no progress is possible without this giving up of oneself. At Holy Communion, the more passive the soul is the more is it active, because the

more it is acted upon by grace. Those good people who, during thanksgiving, worry themselves to stir up semi- hysterical piety or rack their brain for sublime conceptions or fly to a book to help imagination are simply putting as many obstacles in the way of grace. They are substituting self for Christ and must ever remain of earth earthy.

But, will someone say, if this be so, and if Our Lord is to do everything, what need can there be of preparation on our part? Banish that thought, dear Reader, it covers a most dangerous illusion. Know and remember that *never*, at Holy Communion, shall you be able to effect the surrender of yourself to God unless your whole being be thoroughly prepared. Every sin venial or other, every imperfection, idle word or cultivated sensuality clogs the spirit, burdens it, weakens it and makes it less fit for the operations of Christ upon which its entire sanctification depends. It becomes unresponsive, filled with self, empty of Him ;

whereas He would have us empty of self and filled with Him, which is the highest form of love and the end of all religion. They who aspire to it make their daily life a preparation for their daily Communion.

Spiritual Communion.

Deal with spiritual as you would with Sacramental Communion. If you have learnt to hear Mass after the method suggested above you will naturally participate spiritually in the Sacrifice when you are not doing so sacramentally. Never omit this holy practice. As there is a baptism of desire so is there communion by desire ; since desires are the expression of the will, and, before God, to will deliberately is to accomplish. The grace of spiritual communion is not sacramental, but it is none the less precious for that, God has innumerable ways of communicating with those He loves.

Consequently, when the time for communion is at hand prepare your soul for the spiritual reception of Him who is being received sacramentally by others. Surrender your whole being to the action of the Holy

Ghost. Detest and disown whatever in you offends His sight. Believe, hope, love ; He will do the rest.

No Mass can be heard to much advantage without Communion of some kind. The Sacrifice was instituted for us, and by neglecting to assimilate it, either sacramentally or spiritually, we are defeating one of its main objects.

Offering to Our Blessed Lady.

Oh Blessed Mother, I beg of you to accept as your own whatever may accrue to me from the Mass I am about to hear and from my Communion. Dispose of such according to your pleasure. Obtain for me and for all the faithful an increase of love for your Divine Son, and may sinners return to Him in all sincerity. Amen.

